

VIII. *An Account of the very tall Men, seen near the Streights of Magellan, in the Year 1764, by the Equipage of the Dolphin Man of War, under the Command of the Hon. Commodore Byron; in a Letter from Mr. Charles Clarke, Officer on board the said Ship, to M. Maty, M. D. Sec. R. S.*

Weathersfield, November 3, 1766.

S I R,

Read Feb. 12, 1767. **I** Had the pleasure of seeing my friend Mr. M—— a few days ago, when he made me acquainted with your desire of a particular account of the Patagonians, which I most readily undertake to give, as it will make me extremely happy if I can render it in the least amusing or agreeable to you. I wish I could embellish it with language more worthy your perusal; however, I will give it the embellishment of truth, and rely on your goodness to excuse a tar's dialect.

We had not got above ten or twelve leagues into the streights of Magellan, from the Atlantic ocean, before we saw several people, some on horseback and some on foot, upon the north shore (continent), and with the help of our glasses could perceive them beckoning to us to come on shore, and at the same time observed to each other that they seemed of an

L 2

extraordinary

extarordinary size; however we continued to stand on, and should have passed without taking the least farther notice of them, could we have proceeded, but our breeze dying away, and the tide making against us, we were obliged to anchor, when the commodore ordered his boat of twelve oars and another of six to be hoisted out, manned and armed. In the first went the commodore, in the other Mr. Cummings our first lieutenant and myself. At our first leaving the ship, their number did not exceed forty; but as we approached the shore, we perceived them pouring down from all quarters, some galloping, others running, all making use of their utmost expedition. They collected themselves in a body, just at the place we steered for. When we had got within twelve or fourteen yards of the beach, we found it a disagreeable flat shore with very large stones, which we apprehended would injure the boats; so looked at two or three different places, to find the most convenient for landing. They supposed we deferred coming on shore, through apprehensions of danger from them, upon which they all threw open the skins which were over their shoulders, which was the only cloathing they had, and consequently the only thing they could secret any kind of arms with, and many of them laid down close to the water's edge. The commodore made a motion for them to go a little way from the water, that we might have room to land, which they immediately complied with, and withdrew thirty or forty yards; we then landed, and formed each man with his musquet, in case any violence should be offered. As soon as we were formed, the commodore went from us to them, then at about twenty yards distance;

distance; they seemed vastly happy at his going among them, immediately gathered round him, and made a rude kind of noise, which I believe was their method of singing, as their countenances bespoke it a species of jollity. The commodore then made a motion to them to sit down, which they did in a circle with him in the middle, when Mr. Byron took some beads and ribbons, which he had brought for that purpose, and tied about the women's necks, &c. with which they seemed infinitely pleased. We were struck with the greatest astonishment at the sight of people of such a gigantic stature, notwithstanding our previous notice with our glasses from the ship; their number was increased by the time we got on shore to about five hundred, men, women, and children. The men and women both rid in the same manner; the women had a kind of belt to close their skin round the waist, which the men had not, as theirs were only flung over their shoulders, and tied with two little slips (cut from the skin) round the neck. At the time of the commodore's motion for them to retire farther up the beach, they all dismounted, and turned their horses loose, which were gentle and stood very quietly. The commodore, having disposed of all his presents and satisfied his curiosity, thought proper to retire, but they were vastly anxious to have him go up into the country to eat with them; (that they wanted him to go with them to eat, we could very well understand by their motion, but their language was wholly unintelligible to us.) There was a very great smoke to which they pointed, about a mile from us, where there must have been several fires; but some intervening hills prevented our seeing any thing but the

the smoke. The commodore returned the compliment, by inviting them on board the ship, but they would not favour him with their company, so we embarked and returned to the ship. We were with them near two hours at noon day, within a very few yards, though none had the honour of shaking hands but Mr. Byron and Mr. Cummings; however, we were near enough and long enough with them to convince our senses so far as not to be caviled out of the very existence of those senses at that time, which some of our countrymen and friends would absolutely attempt to do. They are of a copper colour, with long black hair, and some of them are certainly nine feet if they don't exceed it. The commodore, who is very near six foot, could but just reach the top of one of their heads, which he attempted, on tip toes, and there were several taller than him on whom the experiment was tried. They are prodigious stout, and as well and proportionally made as ever I saw people in my life. That they have some kind of arms among them is, I think, indisputable, from their taking methods to convince us they had none at that time about them. The women, I think, bear much the same proportion to the men as our Europeans do; there was hardly a man there less than eight feet, most of them considerably more; the women, I believe, run from $7\frac{1}{2}$ to 8. Their horses were stout and bony, but not remarkably tall; they are in my opinion from 15 to $15\frac{1}{2}$ hands. They had a great number of dogs, about the size of a middling pointer, with a fox nose. They continued upon the beach till we got under way, which was two hours after we got on board; I believe, they had some expectations

tions of our returning again ; but as soon as they saw us getting off, they betook themselves to the country.

The country of Patagonia is rather hilly, though not remarkably so. You have here and there a ridge of hills, but no very high ones. We lay some time at Port Desire, which is not a great way to the northward of the streights, where we traversed the country many miles round ; we found firebrands in different places, which convinced us there had been people, and we suppose them to have been the Patagonians. The soil is sandy, produces nothing but a coarse harsh grass, and a few small shrubs, of which Sir John Narborough remarked, he could not find one of size enough to make the helve of a hatchet, which observation we found very just. It was some time in december we made this visit to our gigantic friends. I am debarred being so particular as I could wish, from the loss of my journals, which were demanded by their lordships of the admiralty, immediately upon our return ; but if any article is omitted which you are desirous of being acquainted with, I beg you will take some means of letting me know it, for I will most readily communicate every circumstance of the matter, that fell under my observation, as it is with the greatest pleasure and respect that I subscribe myself,

S I R,

Your very humble servant,

Charles Clarke.